DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 953 JC 850 604

AUTHOR Hoffman, Beverly; Lucas, John A.
TITLE Evaluation of Response to Inquiries Made to the Office of Student Outreach. Research Report Series Volume XIV, No. 1.
INSTITUTION William Rainey Harper Coll., Palatine, Ill. Office of Planning and Research.
PUB DATE 16 Sep 85
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; *Information Needs; Information Utilization; *Outreach Programs; *Participant Satisfaction; Program Evaluation; School Publications; Surveys; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS William Rainey Harper College IL

ABSTRACT

In spring 1985, the Office of Student Outreach at William Rainey Harper College (WRHC) in Illinois initiated a study to determine the effectiveness of their responses to telephone and mail inquiries for information about the college. A survey was mailed to a sample of 420 inquirers, asking about their information needs, their evaluation and use of the materials they received, their unmet information needs, their preferred types of information sources, and their age and enrollment status. Study findings, based on a 70% response rate, included the following: (1) over 90% of the inquirers received information from WRHC within 2 weeks of their request; (2) 62% wanted information about a specific academic course or program; (3) 98.7% received some sort of material from the college, with 83% getting a catalog and 50% an application form; (4) 96% described the material they received as helpful and informative; (5) 34% had been prompted to contact WRHC by a friend or relative; (6) when asked what needed information had not been supplied, 21% mentioned the schedule of classes and 16% the names of contact persons; (7) as a result of receiving the literature, 26.6% said they decided to enroll at WRHC; (8) 83% preferred to learn about WRHC through mail to their homes; and (9) about 23% of the inquirers had not discussed the material they received with anyone, but of those who did, 90% discussed it with friends or relatives as opposed to professional contacts. The survey instrument is appended. (LAL)

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Volume XIV, No. 1

September 16, 1985

ED263953

EVALUATION OF RESPONSE TO INQUIRIES MADE TO THE OFFICE OF STUDENT OUTREACH

Beverly Hoffman

Coordinator, Student Outreach

John A. Lucas

Director

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE

Algonquin and Roselle Roads

Palatine, Illinois 60067

IC 850 604

Operational Staff

Janice A. Cook, Secretary

Karla Hill, Mailing, Tabulation

Penny Jacobs and Linda Pones, Telephoning

A B S T R A C T

THE OFFICE OF STUDENT OUTREACH AT HARPER COLLEGE PROCESSES FROM 200 TO 500 INQUIRIES EACH WEEK FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE. THE OFFICE OF STUDENT OUTREACH DESIRED TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR RESPONSE TO THESE INQUIRIES AND INITIATED THIS STUDY. SAMPLES OF INQUIRERS WERE GATHERED OVER A 12-WEEK PERIOD DURING THE SPRING OF 1985. A SURVEY WAS MAILED TO THIS SAMPLE OF 420 THREE WEEKS AFTER THEIR INQUIRY WAS RECEIVED. AFTER FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES WERE COMPLETED, A 70 PERCENT RESPONSE RATE WAS ATTAINED.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY SHOWED THAT ALMOST ALL OF THE INQUIRERS RECEIVED SOME INFORMATION FROM THE COLLEGE AND MORE THAN 90 PERCENT RECEIVED IT WITHIN TWO WEEKS AFTER THEIR REQUEST TO THE COLLEGE. ALTHOUGH A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF THE INQUIRERS RECEIVED ONLY PARTIAL INFORMATION, ALMOST ALL WERE ABLE TO MAKE A DECISION BASED ON THE INFORMATION THEY RECEIVED.

FIVE OUT OF EVERY EIGHT INQUIRERS WANTED SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT AN ACADEMIC COURSE OR PROGRAM. ALMOST ALL THE OTHER INQUIRIES CONCERNED PROCEDURES. IN TERMS OF THE MATERIALS RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF THE INQUIRIES, FIVE OUT OF SIX PEOPLE RECEIVED A CATALOG AND HALF RECEIVED AN APPLICATION FORM. WELL OVER 90 PERCENT OF THE INQUIRERS DESCRIBED THE MATERIAL THEY RECEIVED AS EASY TO UNDERSTAND, HELPFUL, INFORMATIVE, ATTRACTIVE AND INTERESTINGLY WRITTEN.

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PURPOSE

The Office of Student Outreach processes from 200 to 500 telephone and mail inquiries for information about the College each week. While the bulk of the inquiries are received by the Office of Admissions, a number of weekly inquiries also are received by Institutional Communications, the Information Desk, the Student Development Centers, and the Division Offices. These inquiries in turn are forwarded to the Office of Student Outreach for processing. The Office of Student Outreach desired to determine the effectiveness of their response to these inquiries and initiated this study.

POPULATION SAMPLED

Each week the list of 200-500 inquirers was given to the Office of Planning and Research. From this list, 35 persons were randomly sampled. This sampling continued for 12 consecutive weeks during the spring 1985 semester. Over the 12-week period, 420 inquirers were sampled and a survey mailed to their homes. After appropriate follow-up procedures, the following survey response rate was achieved.

	N	PCT
Mail	195	46.4
Telephone Responses	100	23.8
Total Responses	295	70.2
Unable to Reach by Telephone	116	27.6
Non-Forwardable	8	1.9
Refused to Answer	1	.3
Total Non-Responses	125	29.8
Total Population	420	100.0

METHODOLOGY

The survey (see appendix) was designed by the Office of Student Outreach together with the Office of Planning and Research. During the 12-week survey period, a mailing was made two weeks after receiving a list of inquirers from the Office of Student Outreach. On the average this would be about 2½ weeks after the inquiry was made and by the time the individual received the initial survey in the mail, it would be about 3 weeks after the original inquiry to the Office of Student Outreach. If the person did not respond to the initial survey mailing which included a stamped addressed return envelope, a second mailing was made three weeks later. If there still was no response, the information was gathered three weeks later through a follow-up telephone call.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The age of the inquirers was slightly greater than the profile for degree credit students but considerably less than the profile for non-degree credit students. This would indicate some were inquiring about continuing education or special service offerings but that most inquiries were about degree credit programs.

Over one-third were prompted to inquire by friends or relatives which is consistent with surveys of existing students which shows a similar portion first hear about Harper through friends or relatives. Proximity to Harper prompted another 14 percent to inquire while a search for a specific program led to 12 percent of the inquiries. Literature sent to the home and high school counselors each accounted for 9 percent of the inquiries.

Among those asking for information, some 62 percent were seeking specific course or program information. Application procedures, scheduling information, registration procedures, and entrance requirements were requested by about one-third of the inquirers. Legal tech was the single program drawing the most inquiries, followed by data processing, nursing, dental hygiene, interior design, and business administration.

Considering items received as a result of the inquiry, 83 percent received a catalog, 50 percent received an application form, 22 percent received a career brochure, and 15 percent received a class schedule. Less than 2 percent failed to receive anything by the time of the survey.

In rating the material received, 92 to 99 percent described it as easy to understand, helpful, informative, attractive and interestingly written. This is in contrast to a 1979 study conducted by the University of Michigan which described many college catalogs as written above the reading level of the intended audience -- high school seniors.

Some 23 percent of the inquirers had not discussed the material they received with anyone. Of those who did, 90 percent discussed it with friends or relatives as opposed to professional contacts. With respect to timing, 58 percent of the inquirers received material within one week and 93 percent received material within two weeks of their inquiry.

More than half (52%) of the inquirers made a decision as a result of receiving the literature. Some 27 percent decided to apply to Harper while 21 percent decided to enroll at Harper in a particular semester and 15 percent decided to visit Harper and talk to a counselor about a specific program or course of action. Only 2½ percent are waiting for more information before they make a decision.

When asked if they had received all the information they had requested, only 59 percent of the inquirers answered in the affirmative. Since less than 2 percent received no information this means about 39 percent received partial information. However, as was mentioned previously, only 2½ percent are writing for more information before they can make a decision. Among the additional informational items desired, 21 percent wanted a class schedule, 16 percent needed specific names to contact, 13 percent wanted a more complete description of a career field and 10 percent desired more financial and more transfer capability information.

Finally, inquirers were asked to indicate how they would like to receive information about Harper. The bulk of the respondents (83%) preferred to learn about Harper College through mail to their homes. Some 16 percent

preferred an on-campus meeting with admissions counselors while 15 percent preferred a telephone call to an admissions counselor.

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

Almost all of the inquirers received some information from the College and more than 90 percent received it within two weeks after their request to the College. Although a substantial portion of the inquirers received only partial information, almost all were able to make a decision based on the information they received.

Five out of every eight inquirers wanted specific information about an academic course or program. Almost all the other inquiries concerned procedures. In terms of the materials received as a result of the inquiries, five out of six people received a catalog and half received an application form. Well over 90 percent of the inquirers described the material they received as easy to understand, helpful, informative, attractive and interestingly written.

INFORMATION SERVICES SURVEY

Age	Percent of Those Seeking Information	Percent of Cont. Ed. Students Enrolled Fall 1984	Percent of Degree Credit Students Enrolled Fall 1984
18 or under	13.9	2.6	14.5
19 or 20	15.9	1.1	21.6
21-25	24.1	12.8	25.4
26-35	25.1	29.7	22.0
36 and Over	21.0	53.8	16.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Respondents	295	266	495

What Initially Prompted Person to Contact Harper	Those Seeking Information N	PCT
Recommendation by friend or relative	102	34.6
Live in area and have general knowledge of local educational institutions	42	14.2
Was seeking specific course or program	36	12.2
Literature sent to home	27	9.2
Recommendation by school counselor or teacher	27	9.2
Newspaper ad or article	16	5.4
Former student	9	3.1
Recommendation by employer	8	2.7
Strong self interest in general education	8	2.7
No particular reason	7	2.4
Staff or literature found at another college	5	1.7
Local library	3	1.0
Cable T.V. announcement	2	.7
Yellow pages	1	.3
Harper's reputation	1	.3
Professional association	1	.3
Total	295	100.0

Type of Information Person was Seeking when They Contacted Harper	Those Seeking Information	
	N	PCT
Specific course or program information	182	61.9
Application procedures	101	34.4
Scheduling information	99	33.7
Registration procedures	94	32.0
Entrance requirements	92	31.3
Tuition costs	56	19.0
Financial aid	27	9.2
Was not sure of information needed	15	5.1
Information about transferring credits	4	1.4
Broad information about Harper as contained in catalog	3	1.0
Testing services	1	.3
Charge back policies and procedures	1	.3
Career information	1	.3

Specific Courses or Programs Inquired About

- Did not specify 27
- Legal technology 19
- Computers or Data Processing 17
- Nursing 15
- Dental hygiene 11
- Interior design 10
- Business administration 8
- Real estate 5
- Food service 4
- Fashion design 4
- Fashion merchandising 4
- Accounting 4
- Operating room technician 3
- Cardiac rehabilitation 3
- Legal secretary 2
- Emergency medical technician 2
- Electronics 2
- Marketing 2
- Physical education 2
- Architecture 2
- Nutrition 2
- Psychology 2
- Physical therapy 2
- Paramedic training 2
- Telecourses 1

Specific Courses or Programs Inquired About (continued)

- Liberal arts	1
- Culinary arts	1
- CNC	1
- Medical transcriptionist	1
- Financial planner program	1
- Social work	1
- Biology	1
- Welding	1
- Theater	1
- Child development	1
- Travel	1
- Journalism	1
- Associate in business	1
- Veterinarian	1
- Criminal justice	1
- Secretarial	1
- Drafting	1
- BDP	1
- Math	1
- Word Processing	1
- Aviation	1
- Human resources	1
- Horticulture	1
- Classes offered for transfer	1
- Foreign language	1
- Swimming	1
- Printing	1
- Geology	1

The Information They Received in Response to Person's Request	Those Seeking Information N	PCT
Catalog	243	82.7
Application Form	149	50.7
Specific Career Brochure	66	22.4
Class Schedule	43	14.6
Transfer Guidelines Brochure	23	7.8
Financial Aid Brochure	15	5.1
Never Received Requested Information	5	1.7
EMT Personal Goal Statement	1	.3
Admission Requirements	1	.3
Athletics Schedule	1	.3
Transcript Approval Form	1	.3
Referral to Another Agency	1	.3

Specific Career Brochures Received

- Did not specify	14
- Paralegal	11
- Dental hygiene	8
- Interior design	6
- Computers	4
- Nursing	3
- Real estate	2
- Fashion merchandising	2
- Cardiac Technology	2
- Emergency medical technician	1
- Physical therapy	1
- Paramedic training	1
- Accounting	1
- Data Processing	1
- Hotel management	1
- Child development	1
- Dance	1
- Business	1
- Secretarial	1
- Social Work	1
- Journalism	1
- Nutrition	1
- Operating room technician	1

Description of Material Received	Number of Respondents	Percent Saying Yes
Was easy to understand	284	98.9
Was helpful	285	96.8
Was informative	285	96.5
Was attractive	263	93.2
Was interestingly written	268	92.2

Person with whom Material was Discussed	Those Seeking Information	
	N	PCT
Parents	92	31.2
Friend	85	28.8
Spouse	77	26.1
Did not discuss material with anyone	67	22.7
Brother/Sister	24	8.1
Counselor or Teacher	17	5.8
Did not receive any information	5	1.7
Children	5	1.7
Employer	4	1.4
Co-Workers	4	1.4
Niece	1	.3

How Quickly Person Received Information Requested	Those Seeking Information	
	N	PCT
Within One Week	169	58.1
Two Weeks	102	35.0
More than Two Weeks	15	5.2
Did not Receive Information	5	1.7
Total	291	100.0

What Needed Information was not Supplied by Harper College	Those Seeking Information	
	N	PCT
All needed information was supplied	164	58.6
Schedule of specific offerings for a specific semester	59	21.1
The names of persons inquirer needed to contact	44	15.7
A more complete description of career field person was interested in	37	13.2
The cost of attending Harper and financial aid information	29	10.4
Transferability of Harper courses to other colleges	27	9.6
How to get in touch with counselor	4	1.4
Application Form	3	1.1
Procedures for transferring credits from other colleges to Harper College	1	.4
When a particular course would be offered that was not offered that semester	1	.4
Statistics on job placement of former Harper College students	1	.4
More information on specific math classes	1	.4
Information about a career program which Harper College does not now offer	1	.4
Listing of colleges and different fields available	1	.4
College catalog	1	.4
Evaluation as to whether person meets pre-requisite for specific course	1	.4

Decision Made as a Result of Literature Sent by Harper	Those Seeking Information N	PCT
No decision -- simply ideas to think about	127	45.0
Decided to apply to Harper College	75	26.6
Decided to enroll at Harper in a particular semester	58	20.6
Decided to visit Harper to talk to a counselor about a specific program or course of action	42	14.9
Decided on a course of study for at least the first semester	15	5.3
Decided to visit Harper to talk to a faculty member about a specific program	12	4.3
Decided to attend another college	8	2.8
Decision awaiting receipt of more information	7	2.5
Person found they are over qualified and that Harper's courses are too basic	5	1.8
Found Harper does not offer desired courses at time person can attend	4	1.4
Person lost enthusiasm for Harper College by the way they were treated	2	.7
Decided to wait and attend Harper College later	2	.7
Decided to take employment instead	2	.7
Decided not to attend Harper College	1	.4
Found program desired is too far away	1	.4
Would like to attend Harper but person is slow in planning and applying	1	.4

Method by Which Person Would Prefer Learning About Harper's Programs and Services	Those Seeking Information N	PCT
Mail sent to the home	246	83.4
On-campus meeting with an admissions counselor	48	16.3
Telephone call to an admissions counselor	43	14.6
Newspaper ads and articles	16	5.4
Community library College information services	9	3.1
High school counseling services	8	2.7
Discussions with currently enrolled students	7	2.4
Cable television programming	6	2.0
No longer interested in Harper College	6	2.0
Mail sent to place of employment	1	.3
On-campus orientation program	1	.3

Other General Comments about Harper's Information Services

-- The counselors are very nice and helpful in answering questions. Thanks for the time and assistance. I really appreciate it.

-- Depends on ability to transfer criminal justice course credits to University of Dayton and class schedule at Harper. Will be meeting with my advisor next week to have him look over catalog. Decision will be made pending his input.

-- This person did not answer survey, just made a comment: " I requested this information to help with a Career Day presentation for District 214, thank you, Dr. Lind."

-- In 1976 I attended a parents night at Harper because my daughter had just enrolled. The speaker put a great deal of emphasis on parents coming back to school, so after the meeting I waited through a great many hand-shakes and chit chat as I was embarrassed and did not want others hear me inquiring about going to school. I asked him how many years it would take to get your degree in engineering, if I could only go nights. He looked at me for a moment and said "too many" and walked out leaving me alone in the auditorium, feeling totally humiliated. I attended ECC for many years just taking courses that I needed or wanted but never got over the trauma of that rebuke. Am interested in nutrition and would like to take classes in it but ECC said I would have to go to Harper for them. If I was too old in 1976, they probably would offer me a wheel chair now (I will be 60 this year). I think education and the world in general should look at going to school as a need for being successful or a solution for having failed - this makes it hard on older people who would use it as means for continuing to grow. The only real difficulty I encountered at ECC was the long walk from the parking lot with a heavy bag of books.

-- Please note -- via telephone inquiry was told there were no counselors at the College.

-- Graduated from OCC in 1978 as a PTA and am thinking of other fields at this time.

William Rainey Harper College
Algonquin and Roselle Roads
Palatine, Illinois 60067
312-397-3000

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RECENT INQUIRY. NOW THAT YOU HAVE HAD TIME TO REVIEW THE LITERATURE THAT WAS SENT TO YOU, WE WOULD LIKE TO ASK A FAVOR. . . . . .

Responding to the information needs of currently enrolled and prospective students is an important activity at Harper College. Since you recently requested and received information about Harper College, we would like you to complete the attached survey. Your responses will assist the College in developing information services that best match the needs of our current and prospective students.

You may use the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope to return the completed survey to the College. Your interest in Harper College and reply to the survey are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Beverly J. Hoffman

Beverly J. Hoffman
Student Outreach Coordinator

jc
Attachment

INFORMATION SERVICES SURVEY

I. What is your age?

_____ A. 18 or under
_____ B. 19 or 20
_____ C. 21-25
_____ D. 26-35
_____ E. 36 and over

II. What initially prompted you to contact the College? Check (✓) one.

_____ A. Recommendation of friend/relative
_____ B. Recommendation of a school counselor or teacher
_____ C. Recommendation of employer
_____ D. Newspaper advertisement or article
_____ E. Local library
_____ F. Literature sent to my home
_____ G. Cable television announcements
_____ H. Other (specify)_____

III. Please indicate the type of information you were seeking when you contacted the College. Check (✓) all that apply.

_____ A. Entrance requirements
_____ B. Registration procedures
_____ C. Application procedures
_____ D. Scheduling information
_____ E. Program information (specify program)_____
_____ F. Tuition/Costs
_____ G. Financial Aid
_____ H. Was not sure what information I needed at the time I inquired.
_____ I. Other (specify)_____

_____

IV. In response to your request, what materials did you receive?

_____ A. Catalog
_____ B. Transfer guidelines borchure
_____ C. Career brochure (specify program)_____
_____ D. Financial aid brochure
_____ E. Class schedule
_____ F. Application form
_____ G. Other (specify)_____

V. Was the material you received -- (Please respond to each item)

	YES	NO
_____ A. Easy to understand	___	___
_____ B. Informative	___	___
_____ C. Helpful	___	___
_____ D. Interestingly Written	___	___
_____ E. Attractive	___	___

(Over----)

VI. Did you discuss or share any of the material with the following individuals?

_____ A. Parents
_____ B. Spouse
_____ C. Brother/Sister
_____ D. Friend
_____ E. Counselor or Teacher
_____ F. Other (specify)_____

VII. After you requested the information, how quickly did you receive the literature?

_____ A. Within one week

_____ B. Two weeks

_____ C. More than two weeks

VIII. What information that you needed was not included in the literature sent to you? Check (✓) all that apply.

_____ A. All information I needed was supplied
_____ B. Schedule of specific offerings for a specific semester
_____ C. The names of people I need to contact.
_____ D. I needed more of a description of the career field I was considering.
_____ E. I needed the cost of attending Harper and financial aid information.
_____ F. I needed to know about transferability of Harper courses to other colleges/universities.
_____ G. Other information I needed_____

_____

IX. What decisions did you make as a result of literature sent to you? Check (✓) all that apply.

_____ A. No decision - simply ideas to think about
_____ B. Decided to apply to Harper
_____ C. Decided to enroll at Harper in a particular semester
_____ D. Decided on a course of study at least for the first semester
_____ E. Decided to visit Harper to talk to a counselor about a specific program or about a course of action I might follow.
_____ F. Decided to visit Harper to talk to a faculty member about a specific program.
_____ G. Other kind of decision (specify)_____

_____

_____

X. Of the following information sources, which would you most prefer as a primary means to learn about Harper College programs and services?

_____ A. Mail sent to my home
_____ B. On-campus meeting with an admissions counselor
_____ C. Telephone call to an admissions counselor
_____ D. Newspaper advertisements/articles
_____ E. Discussions with currently enrolled students
_____ F. High school counseling services
_____ G. Community library college information services
_____ H. Cable television programming
_____ I. Other (specify)_____

_____

XI. Please indicate your enrollment status with the College.

A. _____ Currently enrolled -- _____ Full Time
_____ Part Time

B. _____ Planning to Enroll -- Year:
_____ Spring _____
_____ Summer _____
_____ Fall _____

C. _____ Do not plan to enroll

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY. PLEASE RETURN IT TO THE COLLEGE IN THE SELF-ADDRESSED, STAMPED ENVELOPE THAT IS PROVIDED FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE.

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE
FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES
JAN 10 1986